

STRESS SYMPTOMS

The following Stress Danger Signals focus on the medical and physical symptoms common to tension stress. Your physician can best determine your medical condition, but these guidelines will provide you with a general indication of your stress level. Check those signals, which you have noticed:

- ☐ General irritability, hyper excitability, depression
- ☐ Pounding of the heart
- ☐ Dryness of mouth and throat
- ☐ Impulsive behavior, emotional instability
- ☐ Overpowering urge to cry or run
- ☐ Inability to concentrate, flight of thoughts
- ☐ Feelings of unreality, weakness, dizziness, fatigue
- ☐ Floating anxiety, being afraid and not knowing why
- ☐ Emotional tension and alertness
- ☐ Trembling, nervous tics, easily startled
- ☐ High-pitched, nervous laughter
- ☐ Stuttering, other speech difficulties
- ☐ Bruxism, or grinding of the teeth
- ☐ Insomnia
- ☐ Hyperactivity, increased tendency to move about
- ☐ Excessive sweating
- ☐ Frequent need to urinate
- ☐ Diarrhea, indigestion, queasiness, vomiting
- ☐ Migraine headaches
- ☐ Pain in neck or lower back
- ☐ Loss of appetite or excessive appetite
- ☐ Increased use of prescribed drugs
- ☐ Alcohol or drug abuse
- ☐ Nightmares
- ☐ Accident proneness

The more signs that are present, the stronger the likelihood that there is a serious problem. See your physician if you are concerned about these symptoms.

REUNION STRESS-COPING STRATEGIES

Most military families find that reunions are at least as stressful as separations. This is true for couples with children, couples without children, single parents, and single soldiers coming back to friends and family. Following are some coping strategies which may help:

Expect to have a few doubts and worries.

- ☐ Your partner may think you don't need them anymore.
- ☐ Anxiety is a natural and normal part of getting back together.

Forget your fantasies.

- ☐ Give up any fantasies or expectations you may have about what homecoming day should be.
- ☐ Take it easy and let things happen naturally.

Don't expect things to be exactly the way they were before the separation.

- ☐ You've changed, your spouse has changed and your children have changed.
- ☐ Don't get upset by things that are done differently.

Tips on helping children adjust:

- ☐ Children can get angry about their parent being gone.
- ☐ Toddlers and preschoolers may act like the homecoming parent is a stranger. They might not understand about "duty" or "mission".
- ☐ Elementary school children and teenagers may understand, but show anger or fear by "acting out."
- ☐ Get reacquainted and take things slowly.
- ☐ Children are resilient.

Accept and share your feelings.

- ☐ Talk a lot about your feelings, and let your partner talk too.
- ☐ Really listen. Make sure you fully understand what your partner is saying before you respond.
- ☐ Communication is the key.

See things from the other person's point of view.

- ☐ An awareness that the soldier no longer feels a part of things helps us to understand why they can be upset by even the smallest changes.
- ☐ Recognition of the pride a partner feels in the way he/she handled everything alone will help the soldier to understand the importance of accepting changes made during separation.
- ☐ Children are people too. Try to understand how they feel. Change and uncertainty is often very frightening for them, so be patient.

Homecoming

AND

Reunion



COMMUNITY CENTER

BLDG 1-3571

(910) 396-8682

KNOX & RANDOLPH ST

www.bragg.army.mil/mwr/COMMUNITY/ACS/ACS_Default.htm

HOMEcomings AND REUNION STRESS

Whether you are a single or a married soldier, a single-parent soldier, a spouse, or a child, you will face certain stressors associated with Homecoming and Reunion. Below are some of the normal stressors you may face, along with some hints to help you adjust to the changes in your life.

Stressors

- ☐ Emotional letdown
- ☐ Restlessness or sleeplessness
- ☐ No one understands what I have been through
- ☐ Was my spouse faithful?
- ☐ Did my spouse miss me?
- ☐ My friends seem different
- ☐ I didn't expect things to change
- ☐ Other people's concerns seem petty
- ☐ I feel like a stranger at home
- ☐ How will the children react?
- ☐ Will the role I have filled change?
- ☐ Were my children treated well by their guardian?
- ☐ Can I make up for lost time?
- ☐ Did I handle things the right way?
- ☐ When will things feel normal again?
- ☐ I am concerned about finances
- ☐ I am concerned about future deployments
- ☐ The children appear confused and uncertain

Helpful Hints

- ☐ Accept that things may be different
- ☐ Talk about your experiences
- ☐ Go slowly—don't try to make up for lost time
- ☐ Spend quality time with your children
- ☐ Reassure your children. Change often frightens them
- ☐ Curb your desire to take control or to spend money
- ☐ Accept that your partner may be different
- ☐ Intimate relationships may be awkward at first
- ☐ Take time to get reacquainted
- ☐ Forget your fantasies. Reality may be quite different
- ☐ Take time to readjust
- ☐ Communicate with your partner and your family

Children's Reaction to Soldier's Return	
Reactions	Techniques
Birth to 1 Year	
Cries Fusses Pulls away from you Clings to spouse or caregiver Has problems with elimination Changes their sleeping and eating habits Does not recognize you	Hold Hug Bathe and Change Feed and Play Relax
1 to 3 Years	
Shyness Clinging Does not recognize you Cries Has temper tantrums Regresses-no longer toilet trained	Don't force holding hugging, kissing Give them space Give them time to warm up Be gentle and fun Sit at their level
3 to 5 Years	
Demonstrates anger Acts out to get your attention; needs proof you are real Is demanding Feels guilty for making parent go away Talks a lot to bring you up to date	Listen to them Accept their feelings Play with them Reinforce that you love them Find out the new things on TV, at preschool, books
5- 12 Years	
Isn't good enough Dreads your return because of discipline Boasts about Army and parent	Review pictures, school work, activities, scrap books Praise what they have Try not to criticize
13 to 18 Years	
Is excited Feels guilty because they don't live up to standards Is concerned about rules responsibilities Feels too old or is unwilling to change plans to accommodate parent	Share what has happened with you Listen with undivided attention Don't be judgmental Don't tease about fashion, music Respect privacy and friends

REESTABLISHING INTIMATE AND SEXUAL RELATIONS

One adjustment you may face when military separation occurs is reestablishing your intimate and sexual relationships.

Most military couples face the question, "How can two people work together toward achieving intimacy when one of them is often absent from the relationship for extended periods?"

Military couples often find that reunion may bring out feelings of uneasiness, and that their personal relationship is strained. Through an understanding of the effects of separation, you can better cope with the stress that accompanies reunion.

The following information about communication barriers and enhancers may help you to reconnect with your partner

Barriers to intimate communication and sexual relations:

- ☐ Unrealistic fantasies and expectations.
- ☐ Feeling anxiety about engaging in intimacy and sex.
- ☐ Feeling that your partner is a stranger.
- ☐ Feelings of anger, hostility, stress, or negative feelings about the separation.
- ☐ Concern about faithfulness to your relationship.
- ☐ Feeling that sexual relations need to be rushed to make up for lost time.

Communication enhancers:

- ☐ Communication will help bring you closer together. It gives you time to become reacquainted, and helps to let your partner know how you feel.
- ☐ Understand that feelings of anxiety are a very normal part of the reunion process.
- ☐ You have been apart from each other and you both have grown. Take time to get to know each other again.
- ☐ Discuss your negative feelings and frustrations. Fear of losing your partner plays a major role in developing negative feelings. Listen carefully to what your partner is trying to communicate to you.
- ☐ Don't assume the worst about your partner. If you have concerns about fidelity, talk to your chaplain or find a counselor who can help you work through these feelings.

- ❑ In addition to communication, allow yourself time to readjust to being together again. Go slowly and enjoy your reunion.
